Too Risky To Do It Myself

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Too Risky To Do It Myself

by row53seat63

Summary

Little to nothing surprised Samira Mohan at this point. She was almost certain that her brain had beaten the chemical out of her entirely.

So, one must understand, when the first thing in fifteen years to surprise Samira Mohan was a disagreement with Jack Abbot, she was pretty fucking taken aback.

Notes

Haven't written about a straight couple in YEARS. Mohabbot Pitt worms you have taken me completely, enjoy!

Chapter 1

Samira Mohan doesn't do surprises. She was almost certain at this point that her brain had beaten the chemical out of her entirely.

She wasn't surprised at her dad's death, which she was aware sounded like a crazy thing to say; Devastated, yes. She had been completely and wholly devastated. She'd been left grappling for some stability at the wide expanse of uncertainty ahead of her, but she wasn't *surprised* he had passed. Even the unknown future ahead of her at the time was quickly righted in favor of a concrete, *structured* map of the next ten years of her life.

Samira was not astonished by the fact that emergency medicine was the field in which she thrived. Her brain needed movement. The fast-paced environment of the emergency department required all of her being: her brain, her body, her knowledge, her heart.

And when others might've been shocked at their instructor's clear favoritism, Samira was not. She did not feel ambushed by Dr.Robby's very distinct appreciation for Langdon. It grated at her, and made her push herself to extremes her mother would definitely chastise her for, but the fact itself? No, that did not surprise her. She was a brown girl in the field of medicine. The scars on her spine over the years kept her upright in the face of such…annoyances.

And even when Dr. Jack Abbot appeared in her life at the start of her PTMC residency, she did not feel shocked at the way he altered her thoughts. She chalked it up to the calmness and assuredness of his character. *No wonder her thoughts were clearer around him*, the many years in the army had made him a good, firm, and reliable leader. It made sense the way they flowed together during hectic moments in the department, they were simply two personalities that matched up well in their line of work.

Samira Mohan's life did not leave room for bewilderment of any kind. Everything made *sense*.

So, one must understand, when the first thing in fifteen years to surprise Samira Mohan was a disagreement with Jack Abbot, she was pretty fucking taken aback.

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“Her vitals should be stable until surgery gets a chance to admit her, stop in every ten minutes to make sure she's doing alright,” were Samira’s words to the very tired-looking intern. She understood how they felt, and wished she could prepare them for the longer hours to come.

Hands numbly pushing the trauma door open, while her brain faintly wondered (hoped) when the next case would rush through the trauma bay doors. The adrenaline from the save was waning now, settling into a steady thrum as her fingers moved on autopilot to begin charting.

Warmth at her back, for a second, and then the tell-tale sound of a pair of gloves snapping into the trash can, “Great work in there, Dr.Mohan”

Samira had learned not to pause at the frequent praise the night-shift attending exhibited in comparison to his day-shift counterpart. She had reeled in any, and *all*, shock at the warmth that flooded her veins and learned to appreciate it instead.

Her eyes glanced up from the screen, his proud and sure smile. She found her comfortable and easy one matching him in return. They made a good team—not surprising.

She felt his eyes on her, nothing out of the norm. In the part of her brain, not currently typing up *‘Severe Stomach Laceration’*, she knew he had patients to see. He had other students and interns to check on, but he stood here.

Samira could be surprised at the fact that she knew him well enough to know there was something he wanted to say, but, again, why would she be?

She typed out a few more sentences before she decided to end the silent battle of wills.

“You know, I was actually going to send you a study that showed unasked questions led to a one hundred percent increase in anxiety-based assumptions”

She heard his huff of amusement, but saw the seriousness in his eyes still there, and for a split second, Samira had to remind herself that this wasn’t out of the ordinary. Ja-Dr.Abbot looked at her seriously from time to time, he did that with everyone.

“Fellowship”, was the only word out of his mouth. It seemed like he had meant to say more, maybe even ask a question, but his gaze didn’t change and he knew Samira would understand, knew she would get him.

Samira looked at him, waited, made her last sentence longer than she had to, then clicked the ‘sign out’ button. When she rose from her seat, she met his eyes again and held their intensity. A beat. Two.

“Fellowship,” she finally supplied, then, “and coffee”. When she started on a path towards the break room, she knew he would follow her. That wasn’t a surprise. She wondered if it surprised him.

The Emergency Department break room at six AM was desolate and the cleanest it would be all day, both simultaneously due to the night-owl janitorial staff and the hospital workers who were checking all their boxes so they could haul-ass the second the morning shift came in.

Samira heard him sit down on the couch with a sigh, and she didn’t have to look to know that he was probably massaging the back of his knee - the part where the prosthetic latch bugged him the most after a long shift.

She watched coffee slowly filter through the paper almost methodically, she didn’t need it, and realistically probably shouldn’t have it so close to the end of her shift, but it was a reliable habit by now. The faint smell of the coffee aroma revitalized her just a bit and she remembered that Abbot had asked her something.

Samira appreciated that about him, the fact that he didn’t push her. He knew she would both remember and answer his question when she was ready. She turned towards him over her shoulder, watching his fingers soothe the spot she predicted, “No attending responsibilities to, you know, *attend* to?”

Abbot gave her a flat expression, lips quivering slightly at the old joke that she knew he found funnier than let on. “Two discharged, one in the OR, one stable, and the other two in X-Ray”, came his reply as a particularly deep sigh trailed his words as his fingers reached the front of his thigh. Samira refocused her attention on her coffee. She did a mental run through her patients: one stable and delegated, three discharged, and one waiting for surgery.

She let herself pick a good mug (never normally having so many clean options until this late at night), and watched the dark liquid spill into

it. “I have a few offers for fellowship, some in Pittsburgh, some not.” She made her way over to the couch, Abbot wordlessly scooting over for her.

He released a hum of attentiveness as he propped his bad leg on the coffee table for this small, indefinite period of respite. “Smart girl, I’m not surprised.” If Samira shifted, it was to get more comfortable on the couch and had nothing to do with the roll of her stomach at his words. The former made sense, and it was, again, not surprising.

She took a sip of her coffee (black, how she liked it in the final stretches of her shift) and hummed in response. She knew his eyes were on her, but the look she would find? She wasn’t read-sure, yet.

“Anything from PTMC?”

Yes.

“Yeah,” she released with a laugh. It was the first letter she allowed herself to open, the only one she had been nervous about. He knew that, too.

“Good, you deserve it, kid,” his tone was nothing new, always genuine, even more honest. But, his words were measured. She looked at him now, trying to find what she needed in his gaze. Samira took another sip of her coffee, it was bitter and enlightening. She wished things were as simple as this cup of coffee.

“I’m not, I don’t think I’m…leaning towards PTMC,” were her next words. It was a truth, a hard one at that. Her residency here had taught her so much, and when she first considered a fellowship, she felt a pang of certainty that she would want it to be here. She had gotten faster, more sure of herself and her decision-making. The correlation of her improvement with the increase in night shifts was not lost on her.

The kind of doctor she wanted to be, though? One who was patient, understanding, and *thorough*, needed to be cultivated. And did Samira, with all of her knowledge and lists and foresight, think that she could be that doctor here? In her most formative, in-depth years?

Her gaze drifted away from the meniscus of her coffee and back to the man sitting next to her. Her attending, mentor, friend. Abbot’s eyes felt like a brand, searing. Samira was not surprised by his stunned silence. But, fuck, if he would just say something.

He cleared his throat, looking away now. His eyes bounced around the break room, taking notice of things, Samira thought, and trying to find his words in the crevices of the objects.

When he finally did speak his voice was pitched lower, a gravelly note present that she knew indicated he was thinking, *hard*. “May I ask why? Not as your attending, but as your-as someone who knows you”

She didn’t have to think long, too long at least, about why. After all, she was not someone who took any kind of decision lightly.

“I need to be able to grow. Fellowship, it’s *important*. It’s important in a different way than med school and residency are. I need to be able to hone what makes me *Dr.Mohan,* and-”

Samira looked at him now instead of where her eyes were boring into the coffee table, and it took all of her to finish her sentence. Has she ever seen anyone this enraptured? Yes, she thought: in churches, in schools, in lov-

She sighed, "and I don’t know if I can do that here. I don’t know if I can fully be the Dr.Mohan I want to be in The Pitt. Not as ‘Slow Mo’, not with Gloria, not with..” She trailed off her sentence with a broad encompassing gesture. She figured he would know she wasn’t talking about the ER break room.

“Well, I think *Slow Mo* is a stupid fucking nickname”

Samira couldn’t fight the smile and slump of her shoulders at his candidness. She was about to tell him how that wasn’t the point until he continued. She watched as he turned to face her now, fully, and she braced herself for the full focus of his attention. Having Dr. Jack Abbot’s full attention wasn’t a bad thing, but if she wasn’t prepared, man could it knock the wind out of her. It wasn’t shocking, he was a military man and knew how to extract the attention of whomever he needed on a moment’s notice. Yes, that was the perfect explanation for why his eye contact made her feel like she was *someone*.

“You’re good here, even if you can’t see it. You *have* grown; You are not the same doctor you were when you started, hell, you aren’t even the same doctor you were before PittFest. You’re faster, you’re sharper, and even if that was the most important qualification for being a doctor, which it’s *not*, what makes you Dr.Mohan is not lost on anyone here”

Samira fought to keep her breath steady, she wasn’t sure if she had

ever seen him this intense. With patients, yes. With high-stress situations, yes. But with her? No, she's never seen him this dead-set on convincing her.

But, still.

Samira took the last sip of her coffee before she set down the half-empty mug (she couldn't condone anymore caffeine this close to shift change). "I know that's how *you* feel, Abbot," she made sure to level him with the sincerity of her words, "but I'm not sure many others here would agree. At least, those who *need* to believe that, too".

She watched his jaw tick and knew he was fighting annoyance now. She didn't think about how she wanted to smooth it over with her thumb.

"When have you ever needed anyone but yourself to believe in anything?"

She…couldn't argue with that point, and it was beginning to make her frustrated. He was missing the point, intentionally. And, for a split second, Samira thought that she was, too.

"That's not what I mean and you know it," came her reply, it was matter-of-fact, and she tsked internally at the frustration that slipped through. They were both two level-headed people. They didn't fight, ever.

"Fuck if I know anything, Samira," he was alight now, she could see more than feel the tension buzzing through him. He was staring at her, like he hoped that he could convey how important this was through eyesight alone.

"Jack-" she found herself beginning to chastise (they rarely called each other by their first names, even outside of work), and the low groan that simmered out of him had her shifting again. This time, out of frustration, she convinced herself.

"I'm not," he took a deep breath, "I'm not here to try and convince you where to take your fellowship, that's not what this is. But, I don't want you making a choice based on incorrect assumptions about your value here."

Samira couldn't fight the scoff that came out and Jack shook his head just a fraction. The fatigue from the shift was catching up to her, and the filter she normally used before the words reached other people-

patients, colleagues, families-was starting to slip. She was annoyed with Abbot, of all people, why was she annoyed at Abbot?

“You think I don’t know what my *value* is here? On the totem pole of residents, I’m confident Robby would remove my wooden section altogether if he could. Highest patient satisfaction scores don’t mean shit to the person who would literally be *conducting* my fellowship, by the way.”

Her voice was rising, when did it start to rise?

“Fuck Robby, Mohan!” Jack was exasperated now, his arm going out wide in a *who-fucking-cares gesture*. When did his voice start to rise?

“That’s rich, easy enough for you to say, right? *Attending* Dr. Jack Abbot,” came her reply, she was grabbing her coffee cup off the table now and bringing it to the sink. She couldn’t be so close to him anymore, it was making her skin itchy. She didn’t like that they were arguing.

She saw him scrub his hand over his stubble out of the corner of her eye. She focused on grabbing the dish soap and brush instead.

“Why can’t you admit what you and I really know this is about, Samira?” Heat on the back of her neck and a coldness settling in her chest.

A beer hanging limp in his fingers. The river stretched before them.

‘I’m scared, Jack’

She turns to him, too quickly, her brain notes, in a faraway but subdued place by the anger-one hand pressed firmly into the sink.

“And what is *that*, Jack?” Her tone is venomous, and she doesn’t know why. She had told him that in confidence, in vulnerability. She knows he’s not using it against her, knows he never would. She had *wanted* him to know, wanted to let him know her.

It’s silent. They stare at each other, and the tension swirls around the room, wrapping around their necks in slow, steady suffocation.

His pager is the first thing to break their gaze.

He gets up immediately, eyebrows scrunching slightly at the sudden weight on his right leg, but he heads towards the door without much hiccup. He turns before he reaches, mixed emotions sprawled across his face, but he shakes his head and leaves without any fanfare.

Samira finishes washing her mug and hangs it on the drying rack on the counter. She watches the water swirl down the drain for a few moments and wishes she could make the conversation leave with it.

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It's in the middle of listening to a talkative intern that Samira realizes she doesn't know what to fucking do.

It stops her in her tracks, but goes unnoticed to the new girl who is trying to explain to Samira the differences in people from East and West California and why she chose medical school in the former.

It is the first time, in fifteen years, that Samira Mohan does not have a plan. Somewhere, distantly, she watches the intern get called away to a case, leaving with a quick '*Great Talk!'* Samira could barely muster up a smile at.

Her text thread with Abbot stays unusually dry in a way that throws Samira off-kilter. It had been three days since Samira had last seen him, their argument in the breakroom the last time they had spoken. The rest of the shift had picked up unexpectedly and the two had ended up leaving at different times after the shift change: Abbot one hour after, and Samira two-and-a-half.

She knew yesterday was his third off day following his four days on schedule, and she just…didn't know what to do.

The doctor refocused her efforts, and let herself succumb to the random surge of anxiety-induced adrenaline. She took on more patients (three over the normal patient-carry), she looked, she examined, she diagnosed, she re-examined. She did what she was good at, and Samira Mohan was *good* at medicine.

She searched out cases that would not surprise her, and if they did, their solutions did not. She ignored Dana's appraising glances and Robby's upticked eyebrow. She pretended to be engrossed in her paperwork when she saw Mel look at her with a curious expression (that one had not made Samira feel good) and pointedly turn the other way.

For all her attentiveness and efforts to *forget* about Dr. Jack Abbot, there is nothing she can do when she's leaving her last patient's room and he's walking in from triage.

"Dr.Mohan." A head nod, and then he was gone as quickly as he came.

It took Samira two seconds--two impulsive seconds--to realize that no, she would absolutely not have that.

She knew he would not treat her any *worse*, she knew if she let whatever this was go on that he would still guide her, encourage her, as her mentor. She would still have Abbot, but she would lose Jack. And, the fact that the idea scared her beyond belief? Not surprising in the slightest.

It was unfair of him, to weave himself into every burrow of her brain--to make her feel so *good* and then to just..just?

Her feet were moving towards the change rooms before she could even take notice, the camouflage print of his go-bag beckoning her along like a lighthouse. She sped up when she noticed how close he was to the men's room doors.

He glanced back, ears turning up at the sound of footsteps in the hallway with him, and looked genuinely surprised to see her there. He turned around half a second later as he realized, a beat slower than usual, as if he didn't want to.

"Jack", was the only thing she could say as she slowed down, evening her breath out now after her impromptu chase. She had stopped just a foot away from him.

Another nod. "Samira."

He looked at her, eyes deep as ever, but expression infuriatingly impassive. She bit her lip at the frustration bubbling in her gut and she didn't let herself think about the quickness with which those eyes dropped to her mouth.

"This is stupid," was the only thing Samira could say. Not her finest work, definitely not her most intelligent, but she knew with certainty that he would understand. Didn't he always? Her heart thudded once in her chest, hard. She was aware of the slight shift in his feet, but she kept her eyes firmly on his.

"It is," he agreed quickly. It didn't shock her the speed at which he

replied. Military man, smart, not petty.

“So,” she trailed, “We’re good?” *Please say yes*. She watched his gaze flit over her face, landing back to her eyes, always back to her eyes.

“‘Course, Mohan,” he gave her with a small twitch of his lips. She gave him a small smile and a satisfied nod as he turned to push open the change room doors.

Samira wanted to let this conversation ease her worries. She wanted to let herself believe that everything was okay, slip back into their routine of Mohan and Abbot. But, when her subconscious took notice of the guard in his eyes and the quickness with which he left, and no stupid joke to precede his exit, she knew better.

Chapter 2: Chapter Two

Jack Abbot felt the smoke settle at the base of his lungs, then begrudgingly released it into the crisp night air. The silence of the trauma bay grounded him, but left him on edge the way that complete silence normally did. They needed some chairs out here.

Need, he scoffed internally as he took another drag. He was not a man who needed things. Sure, someone could say he needed this cigarette, but it was a habit that kept him steady and was arguably less suicidal than standing on the roof.

It was not something he was addicted to. He had started smoking at sixteen, stopped during med school, started again in the military, and now reaches for one whenever the night air beckons him to.

Yes, he needed air, food, and water. Life's basic requirements. But, other than that?

He took an extra-long drag now, holding the smoke until the tension in the base of his lungs started to sear. He released it reluctantly, missing the way the burn took all of his attention.

He thought of his wife—the person he had known since college, and spent the better first half of his life with—and how she had never made him feel like this. He wondered if that was wrong. Wondered what his therapist would say to that, what questions he would make Jack ask himself.

Jen. Jen and Jack. He had always wanted her there. Young, and in love, starting their future together. It was as simple as that. He *wanted* to spend the rest of his life with her. It was never something born out of a need. And even when she passed, he felt the deep gaping chasm of where his want had run short, where it wasn't enough anymore. But still, never did that endless want tell him he couldn't keep going. He didn't want to, but he could.

So, when Samira Mohan sits on a couch next to him and tells him in no little words that she may be gone forever?

Well, Jack Abbot realizes with a jolt that he fucking needs her.

He needs to see her adrenaline highs after back-to-back cases, he needs to see her rambling on excitedly about a case report he sent her,

he needs to see her wickedly smart brain at work during a complicated case, he needs to see her pull the hair tie out of her hair on a park bench.

He needs it all. Jack Abbot would gladly spend the rest of his life as Samira Mohan's confidant, and nothing more, if it meant he could have her. The thought had hit him like a weighted brick after she told him she wasn't considering PTMC.

And it was unfair. It was utterly *wrong* for him to need her in this way. She was a bright woman, with a future laid out in front of her. A million and one avenues for her to make her mark.

He was a sick, sick man.

Jack couldn't live with himself if he knew he had influenced her to stay for his own selfish gain. He couldn't look at her and wonder if he had kept her here, made her stay so he could have everything he needed while she barely had an inch.

So, he prepared for the inevitable.

He stopped himself from clicking the automatic share buttons to Samira's contact when he found a new medical journal he knew they would both like. He no longer let himself pick up her favorite coffee order under the guise of "balancing the cup holder out". He didn't let himself even *think* about their spot in the park.

Jack dropped the cigarette bud to the floor, exhaling with the crush of the flame underneath his booth.

Trees rustling in the wind. The knock of his knee into hers.

'You're something incredible, Samira'

Jack Abbot was a selfish, selfish man. But, he couldn't let himself be selfish with her. He could survive this, even if it killed him. He had survived many things. *As bad as this?,* his brain asked somewhere far away.

The wisps of the sunrise began to crest over the bridge and he was just glad to have made it to another day.

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Stupid, stupid man, Samira thought to herself as she stirred the pot with a little too much force. A slow jazz record played from her '*Mira In the Kitchen'* Spotify playlist where her phone sat on the counter. Samira watched the saucy red liquid simmer and pop for a few more seconds before she turned around with a huff.

Her empty second glass of wine sat on the island and beckoned her for another. She knew no amount of red, even the good stuff Samira had let herself splurge on, would shake her of this frustration.

She does everything she can on this "self-care" night. She eats the amazing pasta she cooks for herself, runs an especially hot bath, and turns on her favorite shows. When the laugh track from *Friends* makes a vein in Samira's eye twitch, she pauses the show abruptly. She grabs her phone before she has a mind to put it back down.

He picks up on the second ring before she has a chance to hang up.

"Samir-"

"What the fuck is your problem," she spits.

It's silent, eerily so, and Samira can picture his stunned face. Eyebrows flat and mouth opening and closing in astonishment.

"What?" His voice is low, and Samira knows him too well. He's edging on frustration.

Samira has a million and one things she wants to say to him. She wants to repeat herself, *what the fuck is your problem,* chastise him, *why are you acting different,* lay everything bare, *i'm fucking terrified and you know that*.

She doesn't have the chance to, Jack is clearly annoyed at the start of their conversation, and Samira's prolonged silence.

"Did you call me just to yell at me?"

Yes.

"No."

Samira swears she didn't say the yes part aloud, but she knows Jack knows. She hears him sigh and knows he is pinching the bridge of his nose now. She knows he's digging his thumb harder into the right side

because it bothers him more often than the left.

“Are you home”, were his next words. Samira’s confusion strikes her hard, cutting through the slight wine-induced fuzziness around her thoughts. Where else would she be? Did he think she was calling him in some drunken stupor?

“Okay.” The dial tone greets Samira’s ears before she can do anything about it.

What the fuc-, Samira spluttered before she could react. She was going to kill Jack Abbot. All of her problems would soon be gone because Jack Abbot would be dead the next time Samira saw him.

The part of her not blinded by rage distantly knew that she wasn’t in her right mind to have that conversation with him right now. She was too angry, she was sure he was trying to get some rest. They would talk at a better time.

She was being unfair, she knew that. Another glass of wine, it was.

The sudden knocking at her door has her almost drop the wine glass into the sink and curse at the thump of her knee against the cabinet underneath. Samira checks the time on the oven clock, *11:46* it reads.

Glancing around for any available weapons (finding none), she realizes the first important step would be to look through the peephole. She pads over, slowly, more alarmed than she’d like at the person knocking at her door almost fifteen minutes to midnight. She hopes it's one of the neighborhood kids, getting way too rowdy and finding out ding-dong ditch is the funniest thing in the world.

There, however, stands Jack Abbot looking all too pissed off.

What the fuck.

Samira internally regrets putting him on the guest list for her apartment complex. She disengages the latch, and swings open the door. She doesn’t say anything, just stares at him. Her mother would’ve called her rude for not greeting a guest, no matter the circumstances. He just stares back at her.

Samira takes him in. He’s dressed in dark wash jeans, a white t-shirt, and a grey zip-up hoodie, on which she can faintly make out the PTMC logo. His hair is curlier than she's ever seen it, and she has to remind herself that she's angry at him. Not that she would run her

fingers through it if she *wasn't* angry, but she wouldn't feel as bad for thinking about it.

He looks like he barely got out of bed and Samira wonders why he's standing outside of her apartment, instead of…sleeping. He still doesn't say anything to her, just tilts his head forward with his eyebrows raised. A silent, *are you gonna let me in or what?*

She steps aside, half-realizing she's in an oversized *The Office* t-shirt and way too short pajama bottoms. She blinks past the realization, focusing instead on her confusion and (yup, still there!) frustration.

She watches him toe of his shoes by the hallway--hates that he's done this enough times now that it's second nature for him--and watches him sit on one of her kitchen island high-tops. She leans against the back of her couch, facing him, waiting.

"Did you want to carpool together tomorrow or was that for next week's sleepover?"

He looks at her dryly, the only sign that he's amused is the slight twitch of his mouth. Jack clears his throat and sits up a little straighter in the chair, hands clasped between his spread knees. Samira hungrily watches the way the fabric of his jeans stretches *tighter* against his thigh, lamely wishes she could replace the fabric with her fingernails.

He looks at her now as he says, "You're angry with me." Samira doesn't strangle him against her kitchen island, but she manages to let a scoff slip. *Fair trade,* she thinks.

"Huh," she comments ruefully, "Smart man". His gaze bores into hers and Samira fights down a gulp. He looks..serious. Serious enough that Samira's scared that this may be more than just an apology. She tries not to fidget. Fails, when her right foot lifts to scuff at the crack in the wood.

"I've been," Jack looks away for a moment, head tilting in a *so-so* moment as he tries to find the words, "not myself to you, Mohan. Not in the way that you deserve." Samira, for all it takes of her, keeps his gaze. Her shoulders drop slightly at his admission, gaze urging him to continue.

He sighs through his nose, palms rubbing at his thighs now and Samira doesn't think she's ever seen him this…nervous. He's nervous, she realizes a beat too late. It is hard to read nervousness on Jack

Abbot, but she sees it, plain as day now in the scrunch of his eyebrows and the worried way he pulls at a loose thread on his knee.

“No, you haven’t” she finally supplies, and her voice comes out softer than she had meant it to, she was losing some of her anger now, but the confusion still lingered, “Why is that, Abbot?”

He looks away, then looks back at her. Samira sees the moment he’s made up his mind. About what? She doesn’t know. What she does know is that when he gets up to close the three-foot space between them and stand only a few inches away from him, her heart rate picks up.

“I’m going to talk and-I’m not sure where-,” he huffs and Samira’s eyes flit across his face, his expression of ___ causing her to, “I’m going to talk for a minute and I just need you to hear me”.

She nods once, twice, too scared to speak and breaks the *reverence* of his gaze right now. Because that’s the only way to describe the way he's looking at her. His right hand clenches and unclenches at his side.

“I have never known another doctor as smart as you”

Samira’s eyes widened slightly, neck warming, and her knee-jerk reaction is to stop the praise before it starts, forgetting his request for a moment.

“Abbot-” she starts to laugh and he steps closer, effectively cutting off her sentence. His arms come down to either side of her on the couch, and he’s close now. He’s so close she can smell his aftershave and the stupid mahogany-scented candle that she got him for Christmas that he always leaves burning for too long.

His chest is almost touching hers and his voice is serious when he says, “Samira, *please*, let me finish”. Samira shuts up effectively.

“There are doctors who care about finding a solution, there are doctors who care about understanding their patients, and there are doctors like *you*. Caring, quick, compassionate, driven, and *smart*. Smart to know that all of these things matter. Not just in the way they teach you in medical school and show you in clinicals. You’re smart enough to know that all of these things bleed into each other, that one cannot exist without the other.”

Her breathing picks up and the only thing she can do is keep staring at

him. He's complimented her before--in the department, during coffee grabs, etc.--it shouldn't be anything new. But the way he's looking at her now? Like he'll die if she doesn't believe him?

She can't think that his words are anything but the truth.

"You," he shuts his eyes, looking pained, then he opens them again, "You have taught me things that I didn't even know I needed to learn. You have left a *lasting* impression on a 47-year-old war vet, with way too much history behind him." He levels with her, crouching just slightly so that they're on the same eye level. So that the weight of his next words seeps into her very being.

"One, I have been upset at you because you couldn't see that. I was angry that you couldn't understand the sheer mark you've made. On me, on your patients, on fucking PTMC itself". He shakes his head slightly, and Samira almost grabs his chin to set it straight again. She needs his eyes on her, she needs that gaze to hold her steady like it always did.

"Pittsburgh Trauma Medical Center needs you, Dr.Mohan," he says with absolute certainty. "This entire world needs you, anyplace you do your fellowship would need you, do you hear me?"

She nods, it's the only thing she can do. She couldn't even doubt him if she tried, not right now, not with him looking at her like she held the fucking sun in her hands. "Okay," she mutters weakly, voice sounding far away in hers.

"And two," he says, standing up again, arms still bracketing her. "I've been upset with myself for how much *I* need you, Samira". She swears her breath stops. Years later, when she looked back at this moment, she swore she died in that second.

"You-," Samira asks, bewildered, Jack cuts her off with a firm nod. Gaze boring into hers. Something about that word, *need*, makes everything click into place for Samira.

Oh, fuck you Jack Abbot.

Samira is grabbing the back of his neck with a frustrated huff before she can even realize what she's doing. His lips, stunned for a moment, are on her back hungry and yearning. His hands release the couch from where he was leaving divots in the cushions and move to grip onto her waist with the same force. Samira feels his palms skirt over her body, touching and holding, then bouncing away like he's not sure

where to situate them.

He tastes flat-out addictive and Samira was wondering why she waited so long to kiss this man. When she could've known how it felt to have his tongue slide into her mouth, *amazing*, and to have his hips buck into her, *really amazing*. She felt him dip to grab the backs of her thighs, lifting her legs until they were secure around his waist.

"Just coming to my apartment-", Samira whispered roughly onto his lips, deft fingers undoing his belt buckle with ease, "and making me feel like this".

The knot of arousal in Jack's stomach was about to tie itself into an orgasm if he didn't keep himself under control. His hands tightened onto Samira's thighs, earning a small whimper from the girl underneath him. "Fuck", he whispered, what fucking orphanage did he save in his past life to be able to know what Samira sounds like?

Samira snakes her fingers underneath Jack's shirt, nails raking on the available skin. Hard, solid, scarred, and--*wow*--so smooth skin. A groan tumbled itself from his throat, the grip on her thighs turning heavy. *More of that*, Samira thought sadistically.

More, more, more forever.

Abbot dips his head into the crook of her neck, nostrils catching on something lavender and clean. His fingers skirt up to the crook of Samira's thigh, catching on unmistakable wetness seeping through her shorts. Abbot couldn't hold back the groan that pulled itself roughly out of his throat.

"Well, doesn't really seem like you mind, Samira", the doctor punctuated his sentence with a press of his fingers at the apex of her thighs. Samira moaned and she would've sworn that she had more than two glasses of wine.

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Jack's drunk, he's sure of it. Samira Mohan has created a non-alcoholic addiction with that insanely smart brain she has and Jack's drunk.

He will tell any willing ear that he did not come over here to seduce her. He had woken up--he was more so just lying in bed with his eyes shut, let's be honest--to the sound of her specific call tone and answered immediately. The war-lined pit in his gut couldn't help but

worry if something had happened to her, already envisioning the possible scenarios she could be calling about.

What he had *not* envisioned was her pissed-off voice at the other end of the line. The fear had quickly left and was shoved to the side by (albeit misplaced) frustration. The process of grabbing his prosthetic, his keys, and dressing himself (throwing on pants and a jacket) had felt like a fever dream. It had only dawned on him what he was doing when Samira opened her door and he was met with the sight of her (still pissed-off) and *beautiful* face.

Jack had not planned on pulling her sleep shorts to mid-thigh and pushing, *soaked*, underwear to the side and running two fingers between Samira's lips. No, he did not plan on tucking his index finger next to his ring finger--because she was just *that* ready--and watching this goddess of a woman's eyes roll back into her head as he slid them into her without a hitch.

He felt her blunt nails dig small crescent shapes into his abdomen and he wondered if it would be crazy to get them tattooed there. He wanted to remember all of this: the way her lips were parting, the wisps of hair getting stuck to her cheeks, the warm heat of her wrapped around his fingers, and the stunned way he was looking up at her.

"Look at you," Jack whispered, the words leaving his mouth before he could do anything to stop them. "You have any idea what you're doin' to me, Mohan?" He punctuated his statement with a curl of his fingers--searching, seeking.

And when her back bowed into him and a damn near pornographic moan tumbled from her through, well…he was absolutely not going to stop.

"F-fuck you"

He was sure she could feel his smirk against her cheek and his mouth moving up from her neck, towards her jaw, stopping at her ear. "Isn't that what I'm doing?" And then Jack decided there was no more time for games because he *needed* to know what Samira Mohan looked like when she was coming on his fingers.

He felt her legs start to shake around him, missing the telltale shuffling of her fingers against fabric. It was only when he felt her lithe fingers wrap around his bare cock that he jolted at the realization.

Samira tried to stifle a moan—failing—at the length of him she found in his boxers. Jack Abbot had a really nice cock. Another fact she can't believe she waited this long to know. She felt the sopping amount of pre-cum at his tip and would've loved to drop to her knees if it wasn't for the searing orgasm she felt building at his fingertips.

She was tugging on his cock while he fingered her—*how in god's name was she so good at that*—and Abbot felt his balls clench roughly in warning. He used the hand not inside her to rip her hand out of his pants. The pout on her lips made him want to kiss it away.

There was no way in hell he would come before she did.

Samira felt Jack pause as he repositioned himself, eyes creaking open at the sudden loss of sensation. She watched as he tugged her shorts and underwear down fully to drop to his knees. Samira was sure her limbs were gonna give out from underneath her.

With a speed Samira could not keep up with, Jack slid his fingers back into her with his tongue now on her clit. Her heel dug into his back as her fingers scraped through his scalp, bringing him impossibly closer. She was sure she was dripping down his wrist, her vision going white every time he sucked her clit and curled his fingers just *so*.

"J-Jack," was her next attempt at words. She looked down to find him making un-breaking eye contact with her. Why would she be surprised that Jack Abbot also doesn't look away while he's eating pussy.

She comes before she realizes it's happening, her heel digging into his back without warning. Jack groans into her and doesn't stop lapping at her, tongue slowing down to trace light circles around her clit until Samira's twitching and aching again.

She stands up abruptly--or she imagines she does--and tugs him up off the floor. Her hand finds his still-hard cock and she squeezes the base. Samira doesn't miss the slight buckle in his knees and rationalizes that she needs to have this man inside her *now*. She's moving her hand to his arm now and pulling him in tow behind her.

He follows, because she knows now for certain that he always will, and she doesn't spare any thought for her lack of decor or haphazard sheets. Samira turns around and only has one thought in her mind. They kiss again. Samira's not sure who leaned in first but it's clear neither of them will stop. Her mind briefly wonders about all the times she's thought of this—denied herself of it. The kiss is hot and needy, but it's laced with the same thing that makes Jack pull her

impossibly closer to deepen it.

They press against each other until Samira feels the back of her knees hit the end of her bed. She's pushing herself up as Abbot climbs on top of her. One day, she'll ride this man and edge him until he's teary-eyed but that day is not today. Her fingers skim underneath the hem of his shirt once more hinting at what she needs.

Jack Abbot is fucking solid, as she predicted. She hungrily takes in the wide expanse of his shoulders, pale skin decorated with freckles. Samira wants to kiss them all, and traces them with her tongue, and compares them to the ones on his cheeks.

They strip off the last of their clothes in between kisses. Samira pulls away for a brief second, pondering. Maybe she's being stupid and reckless.

Or maybe Jack Abbot is naked in her bed.

"I'm on birth control" she blurts, "and I haven't been with anyone in god knows how long. I'm clean."

Jack stares at her for a beat. He looks hungry.

"Vasectomy, got it done six years ago now"

"Great"

"Fantastic"

And when Samira feels the first stretch of him, she knows she's done for. She knows she's squeezing him tight, and can see it in the way his eyebrows knit together and his shoulder muscles ripple with tension.

He doesn't look away, not even here, when he starts to move. They both moan and Samira can't fight the way her eyes shut at the feeling. *Fucking beautiful*, Jack whispers.

He's on his forearms and bracketing her with thick biceps that Samira finds her nails sinking into. His lips are on her neck, fingers pinching her nipples and caressing any available skin. Every breath Samira took was filled with him somehow; his scent or his taste or both. There was no escaping him. And Samira realized, with a shock, there was no escaping the way he made her feel.

She found his hand near her head, fingers twisting and searching

frantically for his wrist. Her sudden tapping made his pace slow down with a concerned expression gracing his features.

“Are you ok-”

She shook her head at him, finally grabbing a hold of his wrist and bringing her palm flat against the left side of her chest. She held his wrist first over her heart, willing him to feel the steady thump of the organ. Samira was sure he could see it, written across her eyes and burrowed deep into her face. She never had to explain a thing to him did she? But, still, she said it out loud anyway--scared that if she didn’t do it now, she never would.

“I need you, too, Jack”

Samira would never forget the shock that flitted across his features. It happened in slow motion: the slight “o” shape of his lips, the drawing up of his eyebrows, and the widening of his eyes. The sound that tumbled out of him was somewhere in between a groan and a sob. Samira was shocked by the force of his next thrust.

The rhythm had changed now from fast and rough, to slow and *deep*. Jack’s thumb finds her clit and that white-hot pleasure is at the forefront of Samira’s attention.

“Come with me, *please*,” Samira begs and Jack is nodding frantically, forehead pressed against hers. Samira’s vision goes white and she comes, whole body wracking with the movement and electricity coursing through her bloodstream. She feels and hears Jack follow shortly after her, Samira’s eyes opening just long enough to watch his mouth part and his body shake.

After they’ve come down, the trip to the bathroom (Samira’s doing) and the changing of the sheets (Jack’s doing) happen in a blur. Before she knows it, she’s curled up right back up against his side in a bed that’s always felt too big for her.

“You need me”

Samira looks up to find Jack with an all too self-satisfying look on his face and she can’t help but swat his chest. She can’t fight her own smirk, or sleep, as she curls into him deeper.

“Well, yeah, I’m just glad you said it first,” she mumbles. She feels the vibration of his answering hum beneath her palm. She recalls a pig-tail catheter and his steady eyes. “It was a little too risky for me to do

it myself."

His laugh is the last thing she hears before she falls asleep. If Samira was surprised that it was the best night of sleep she's gotten in years—she definitely wasn't surprised to know why.

Chapter 3: Chapter Three

Jack Abbot wakes up face-to-face with a monkey stuffed animal. He sighs and turns around, eyes squinting slightly at the bright streams of light coming in through a curtain that is distinctly *not his*. If you told him three months ago that confessing his feelings to Samira Mohan would result in him waking up routinely in her bed with her most treasured stuffed animal, well he…

Yeah, he would've done it all over again.

He sits up and cracks his neck, groaning at the satisfying pops of his spine. He reaches for his prosthetic (neatly tucked away in a macramé basket that Samira made for his prosthetic which made his heart feel suffocatingly whole) and fastens it on like second nature.

He smells coffee and breakfast wafting through the door and uses all of his strength to lead him towards the bathroom instead of the woman he knows is singing softly in the kitchen. There's a second toothbrush in the holder for him now which sits snuggly next to his aftershave bottles and clipper.

He finishes brushing his teeth and lets himself relax. They have a rare day off together and there's nothing for them to do but…be. Samira had mentioned something about an Indian Farmer's market a couple of blocks over, and he dimly wonders if she would be up for it today.

Jack rounds the corner to find, as he expected, Samira Mohan dancing to the tune of a song from her cooking playlist. She smiles as she sees him enter and Jack is struck by the same knowledge that seems to hit him every single time he sees her. He wonders if there'll ever be a day when her smile doesn't feel like the sun, and where Samira doesn't feel like home.

He doubts it.

--

The end of *'She's Always a Woman'* finishes while Samira adds cream to her cup of coffee and begins to lay the bacon on the pan. She turns away from the melodic sizzling to peer over at Abbot.

She would tease him normally for this sight: newspaper open, reading glasses hanging from the end of his nose. However, the sight fills her

heart with such warmth that she has to look away again. It was rare that she had enough energy in the morning to beat him before he made breakfast for them. It's not the first time she's hoped to see this sight forever.

"So, whatd'ya say we take up a volunteer shift today?"

Samira delivers a dry look over her shoulder and can't help but laugh at the smirk on his face. She flips the bacon with a pair of tongs seeing the crispy charred side. *Nice*, Samira prides. She's stealing this piece for herself.

"Such a foolish man to tease the bacon lady," Samira laughs. She hears Abbot's chuckle behind her as she turns to slide him his mug of coffee. She turns around to face the kitchen island fully, her own mug of coffee in her hands.

"So, what are the plans for today?" she questions while taking a sip.

Jack folds his newspaper, setting his coffee mug on top of it. He always gives her his full attention, all one-hundred-and-ten-percent of it. "I was thinking we could head over to the Indian market down by Randyland that you mentioned the other week. It's today right?"

Samira almost gaps in shock when she realizes that, *yes!*, it was in fact today. God, she questions, that was *weeks* ago now, how did Jack even remember it was on this date? She was scrolling through her Instagram and bookmarked the post, expecting to forget about it like all the rest. She's sure she's staring at him. Jack's gone back to his newspaper now even though she hadn't yet answered about the market today. Again, never needing an immediate answer from her, always letting her speak when she's ready.

Jack's voice slices through her thoughts.

"Easy killer," he laughs, eyes darting towards the quickly burning bacon, "might burn the place down." She hums as she turns off the stove now, pushing the hot pan towards the warmer on the stove.

She knows now. Maybe she always had.

She looks at him again. She knew even when she made her pros and cons lists, and her visits all over the country, and her searches into specialties, that it would always be PTMC.

"That would be unfortunate," Samira drawls as she reaches for the

plate set on the counter, eggs and pancakes already waiting. Jack agrees noncommittally, gaze still focused on the newspaper. She scoops two pieces onto her plate, three pieces onto his.

She slides the plate across the kitchen island so that it's resting in front of him.

“...especially if I need my apartment for the next two years of my fellowship”

Abbot turns his head towards her so fast that Samira’s worried for a second he might’ve tweaked a nerve. He’s sitting so still as if he’s scared he might make her backtrack by moving an inch.

“For your…”

“Fellowship”, Samira hums as she draws out the end of the word. She can’t help but tease. “You know those 2-3 years after residency where y-“

She’s up in the air and shrieking before she can finish her sentence. *Tight* arms wrap around her torso before planting her on the ground. Abbot stands back sharply, looking her square in the eyes.

“This is what you want?” He asks, his voice is still and clear. “This is all you right, Samira? Because you know that I will make this work no matter where you want to do your fellowship. Timbuk-fucking-tu if that’s what-“

Samira laughs and she gently grabs his face with her hands. She makes him look at her, *truly* look at her now in the way that he’s always done. Knows he always will. She knows how true her words are before she even says them.

“PTMC and you, Jack. It was always gonna be PTMC and you.”

Jack Abbot tasted like toothpaste, and coffee, and love, and certainty. He tastes like her future.

It was there in her kitchen, on a random Wednesday off, that Samira Mohan realized she was starting to like surprises.

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